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## Brokers bought arms from Poland

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WASHINGTON — The international network supplying the contras has been buying guns from Poland to use against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua that Poland supports, according to French, Portuguese and American sources.

The supply effort, in which a Danish ship at least twice picked up arms in Polish ports before heading for Portugal and France to load on more weapons, brought hundreds of tons of Polish guns and ammunition to the contras.

The disclosure illuminates further the complex and largely secret system of supply set up to provide the contras with weapons following a cutoff of U.S. military aid to the insurgency in 1984.

It was not known exactly how arms for the contras were obtained from Poland, whose Communist government is a strong political supporter of the Nicaraguan regime, or whether the Poles were aware of the destination of the weapons they sold.

Miroslav Miernik, spokesman for the Polish Embassy in Washington, said yesterday he was unaware of any Polish arms sales for the benefit of the contras but would check with his government.

Mr. Miernik said he thought it was unlikely, but not impossible, that the state-run Polish arms industry would sell arms to a Western broker for shipment on a Western vessel. He did not exclude the possibility that documents submitted for such transactions misrepresented the intended destination of the arms and that Polish authorities had been duped.

Although most of the weaponry supplied the contras has been of NATO origin, some Soviet-bloc arms and ammunition have been sought because of their compatibility with the weapons issued the Sandinista army, according to the sources associated with the resupply effort.

"This way, when the guerrillas seize enemy weapons, it is easier to assimilate them," a source explained.

On at least two occasions in the past two years, shipments of arms and ammunition have left Polish

ports to make their way to the contras in Central America, sources said.

In the first instance, the Danish steamer Erria left Gdansk on April 25, 1985, with more than 100 tons of AK-47 assault rifles and ammunition, according to shipping records.

The ship stopped in Setubal, Portugal, to take on Portuguese weapons ordered in the name of the Guatemalan armed forces, according to Portuguese Defense Ministry documents.

The Erria left Setubal May 8, 1985, declaring its destination to be Puerto Barrios in Guatemala, shipping records show, but instead went to nearby Puerto Cortes in Honduras, where the weapons were unloaded, sources said.

U.S. officials said they understood that all the arms aboard the Erria — both Portuguese and Polish — were turned over to the contras, who maintain base camps in southeastern Honduras, just across the border from Nicaragua.

Documents provided to the Portuguese Defense Ministry by arms brokers handling the transaction attested that the Portuguese-made weapons were for the Guatemalan army.

An "end-user certificate" to that effect had the signature of Brig. Gen. Cesar Augusto Caceres Rojas on stationery of the Guatemalan general staff. Yet the Guatemalan government says General Caceres didn't sign it and that Guatemala neither ordered nor received any arms from Portugal.

The certificate was endorsed by the U.S. firm Energy Resources International. Associated with the Vienna, Va., firm, sources said, are Richard V. Secord, a retired Air Force general, and Thomas G. Clines, a former CIA agent, both of whom have been cited in congressional testimony as organizers of a private contra supply effort.

The second shipment of Polish arms to the contras also involved the Erria, but another vessel transported the weapons to Central America, according to shipping records and knowledgeable sources.

Last July 10, the Erria took on 158 tons of light arms and ammunition at Szczecin, Poland, and sailed to Setubal, Portugal, where 200 tons of Portuguese weapons was put on board, records show.

Portuguese authorities said they approved shipment of the Portuguese-made weapons on the basis of

an end-user certificate that had the signature of General Caceres.

After plying between Portugal and Gibraltar, the Erria turned up last Sept. 15 in Cherbourg, France, where it unloaded its cargo of 358 tons of weapons, according to knowledgeable French sources.

Five days later, the Danish ship Iceland Saga sailed from Cherbourg for Central America with the Polish and Portuguese arms that the Erria had brought, the French sources said.

The weapons were delivered to Honduras and transferred to the contras, U.S. sources said.

Last month, the *Los Angeles Times* said the Erria turned up in Cyprus — an easy run to Lebanon — last May when a U.S. delegation, led by Robert C. McFarlane, the former national security adviser, was secretly in Tehran trying to obtain the release of U.S. hostages in Lebanon.

The *Times* said the Erria was there "apparently to transport a courier with \$1 million in ransom . . . as part of an ultimately unsuccessful effort" to gain the hostages' freedom.

So far it has not been possible to determine under whose legal control the Erria was operating when it picked up arms from Poland and ran its errand to Cyprus.

As more is being learned about the arms shipments themselves, the financing remains largely a mystery. This is true both of the contra arms deals and the covert sales of U.S. weapons to Iran, all of which are under investigation.

The investigations started on the premise that proceeds from the Iranian transactions had been diverted to buy arms for the contras. But if those efforts were linked, they were by all evidence joined after the contra supply operation was well under way.

The first U.S. arms sales to the theocratic regime in Iran were authorized by the president in January 1986. Organization of contra supplies began almost immediately after Congress ended U.S. aid in October 1984.

In the interim, say sources associated with the resupply effort, the contras have rarely been short of weapons.